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**Pickpockets and other scammers** operate everywhere, tricking and stealing from both locals and visitors. But for most people, scams and petty theft are bigger concerns on the road than at home. Most scammers target tourists and touristy places, simply because it's easy. Often times, tourists don't really know how things work or where they're going, and they tend to carry a lot of valuables on them. They often congregate in crowded areas and easily get distracted by the sights and sounds of a new place.

## Use your **HERO Neck Wallet** to beat the pickpockets!

Before we get into the do's and don'ts, we've found that the #1 way to avoid getting pickpocketed is to use a quality neck wallet like the one we sell on Amazon **HERE**. Busy cities across Europe and Asia are particularly known for their pickpockets, but this little pouch makes it next to impossible for them to get to your valuables. It fits your passport, cash, credit cards and even your phone while keeping them fully concealed under your clothing. Since pickpockets rely on picking your pockets, your valuables will be safe in the neck wallet because you won't have any valuables in your pockets!




We've found that the #1 way to avoid getting pickpocketed is to use a quality neck wallet.



# DO'S AND DON'TS FOR AVOIDING PICKPOCKETS



- 1 DON'T carry unnecessary valuables with you.** The more money and other valuables you have with you, the more you stand to lose if you get pickpocketed. The best way to combat pickpocketing is by making sure there's not much to take. Don't carry around tons of cash, lots of credit cards, or electronic devices you won't actually need. Just take what you'll need or use on that outing, and leave everything else stored in your hotel room.
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- 2 DO spread out your valuables.** If all your valuables (credit card, cash, passport, etc.) are in one place, you'll lose everything if you get pickpocketed. But if you separate your items, putting some things in a pocket and others in a wallet or bag, only one stash is likely to be stolen. It's especially smart to divide up your cash, which is most pickpockets' main target.
  - 3 DO carry a decoy wallet.** Take this a step further by carrying a decoy wallet. Buy a cheap wallet and fill it with expired credit cards, an old ID, some business cards, and a few dollars in cash. Put your real wallet in a safe spot, and keep the decoy in a pants pocket or the outer pocket of a bag. Pickpockets will find the decoy and think they've hit the jackpot (you can also hand over the decoy if you get mugged) – and your more important belongings will remain safe and sound.
  - 4 DON'T keep things in unsealed pockets.** An unsealed pocket, whether it's on a jacket, pants, or the outside of a bag, is one of the easiest places to steal from. Unless your pockets have some type of closure, ideally a zipper, avoid keeping any valuables in them. Pickpockets will usually be able to tell something's in there, and it'll be relatively easy for them to reach in and grab it. (Plus, there's a risk your valuables could just fall out!)
  - 5 DO make use of interior pockets.** It's much harder for thieves to reach an interior pocket of a bag than it is the main compartment, especially if the pockets zip or button. These pockets add an extra layer of security, and on some bags, they're practically invisible, making them a good place to store your valuables.



**It's much harder  
for thieves to  
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pocket of a bag.**

- 6 Do put your valuables in an interior bag.** Professional pickpockets don't just reach into your bag – they might slash the side of the bag to get to what's inside it.

TRAVEL EXPERT

**One travel expert told us their creative way to thwart bag slashers in Mexico City.**

“ I got so paranoid that I decided to put my items, including my camera, in a plastic bag, and I hung this inside my day pack so that the inside plastic bag didn't touch the sides of the main bag. I walked around the Zócalo, holding my day pack tightly beside or in front of me, and was quite happy that no one slashed it. So imagine my surprise when I got back to my hotel room and saw two perfectly straight slits in the side of my bag. I hadn't noticed at all! The good news? My trick worked! My camera and other things were safe and sound in the inner plastic bag that the slasher hadn't reached with his/her blade.”

James from [www.TravelCollecting.com](http://www.TravelCollecting.com)

- 7 DO carry a shoulder bag instead of a backpack.** Compared to other types of bags, backpacks are very easy to steal from. Since they're on your back, a pickpocket can remain out of sight while reaching into it, and you're much less likely to notice someone bumping into you from behind. Most backpack zippers are relatively accessible and easy to open, which means a pickpocket could feasibly open up your pack, take something from it, and get out of there without you even seeing them. Taking something from a shoulder bag or cross-body bag, on the other hand, usually requires approaching the person from the side or even the front, which is much more noticeable. Of course, backpacks are sometimes the most convenient, so choose one with anti-theft features if you can (see below).

Compared to other types of bags, backpacks are very easy to steal from.



- 8 DO use anti-theft gear when possible.** Getting pickpocketed is a big enough problem that it has spawned a whole industry of anti-pickpocketing gear. Hidden zippered pockets, cut-proof straps, slash-resistant fabric, and locking zippers are some of the features available on anti-theft purses, backpacks, and even pants. If you're going to an area where pickpocketing is common, it's worth investing in gear like this for a little extra protection.
- 9 DO hold your bag in front of you when possible.** Regardless of what type of bag you're carrying, hold it in front of you whenever you can. A purse or shoulder bag that's pushed behind your body is an easy target, but tucking it under your arm will keep it much more secure. You can even take off a backpack and hold it in your arms in crowded places or on public transportation.



- 10 DO put your bag on the ground between your feet.** In many cases, one of the safer spots for your belongings might be between your feet. Why? It will probably be pretty noticeable if someone tries to reach for something in between your legs. This can be a useful tactic almost anywhere, including at restaurants and on public transportation.
- 11 DO try to stand against a wall or corner in public places.** Standing right next to a wall can also help prevent pickpocketing, since it means people won't be able to approach you from all four sides. This is especially useful if you're wearing a backpack, since someone could otherwise come up behind you and steal from it without you noticing. If your back is against a wall, it will be a lot more difficult.
- 12 DON'T draw attention to where your valuables are stored.** When people are worried about pickpockets, they tend to frequently check that they still have their valuables, especially where there are signs that say things like "Beware of pickpockets." But while constantly patting your pocket to feel that your wallet or phone is in there might be reassuring, it also tells the pickpockets exactly where to reach. Resist the temptation to keep checking, and it'll make it harder for someone to steal from you.
- 13 DON'T wear flashy jewelry or accessories.** Pickpockets target people that have something worth stealing, so wearing fancy jewelry, bags with designer logos, or other flashy accessories makes you a target. Leave those items at home, and choose non-descript jewelry and clothes instead.
- 14 DO be aware of using your electronic devices in public.** Flashing expensive electronic devices like smartphones, tablets, and cameras also gives pickpockets something to steal. Of course, you'll often want to use these devices to look at maps, take photos of your trip, or read while you're riding on the bus, but just be extra aware when you take out your devices.

Resist the temptation to send messages or check your notifications while you're walking down the street (they can wait!).



**15 DON'T pull out wads of cash.** Of course, wads of cash are a pickpocket's dream. When you need to pay for something, don't pull out a huge stack of bills. Someone could swipe it right then, and it also identifies you as a lucrative target. Discreetly sort through your money inside your bag, and only take out what you need.



**16 DO be aware that pickpockets may try to distract you.** People who are on guard make terrible pickpocketing targets – so pickpockets frequently try to create a distraction first. They might do this in any number of ways, including spilling something on your coat, shoving you (and often apologizing profusely), dropping their belongings, suggesting you've dropped something, getting into a fight with someone else, playing with your children if they're with you, acting drunk, pretending to collect donations for an organization or signatures for a petition, or even just striking up a conversation. Often times, this is a team effort, and one person will create the distraction while their accomplice steals from you.

#### TRAVEL EXPERT

**One travel expert shared their story of this tactic being used in Italy.**

“My friend was standing outside the train station in Florence having a cigarette while I went to get us coffee. One guy approached her from the left asking if she spoke Italian and as she turned left to respond, he must've had an accomplice swipe her day bag from the right. She lost her passport, wallet, camera – all her cash.”

Emma from [www.MoneyCanBuyMeHappiness.com](http://www.MoneyCanBuyMeHappiness.com)

#### TRAVEL EXPERT

**Another blogger had a more dramatic experience at a popular park in Phnom Penh.**

“Out of nowhere, bikes came down the footpath, and a lady swiftly bent down off the back of one and picked up our youngest boy, only 20 months old at the time, and started showering him in kisses. I ran to grab him back, only maybe 5 meters from where we'd all been sitting on the park bench, and my husband and friend likewise ran to grab the other children. That was all the distraction that was needed for another motorbike to ride past and steal our backpack. The whole thing happened in under a minute.” Try not to lose focus on your belongings, even if something unexpected is going on around you.

Keri from [www.OurGlobetrotters.com](http://www.OurGlobetrotters.com)





## 17 DO be wary of overly friendly strangers.

The hospitality and warmth shown by strangers is sometimes the best part of travel; at other times, it's a surefire sign you're about to be pickpocketed or scammed. If someone approaches you out of the blue to offer "help," be aware that they may just be trying to get near you and earn your trust so you'll let your guard down – and they can swipe something from your bag or pocket.



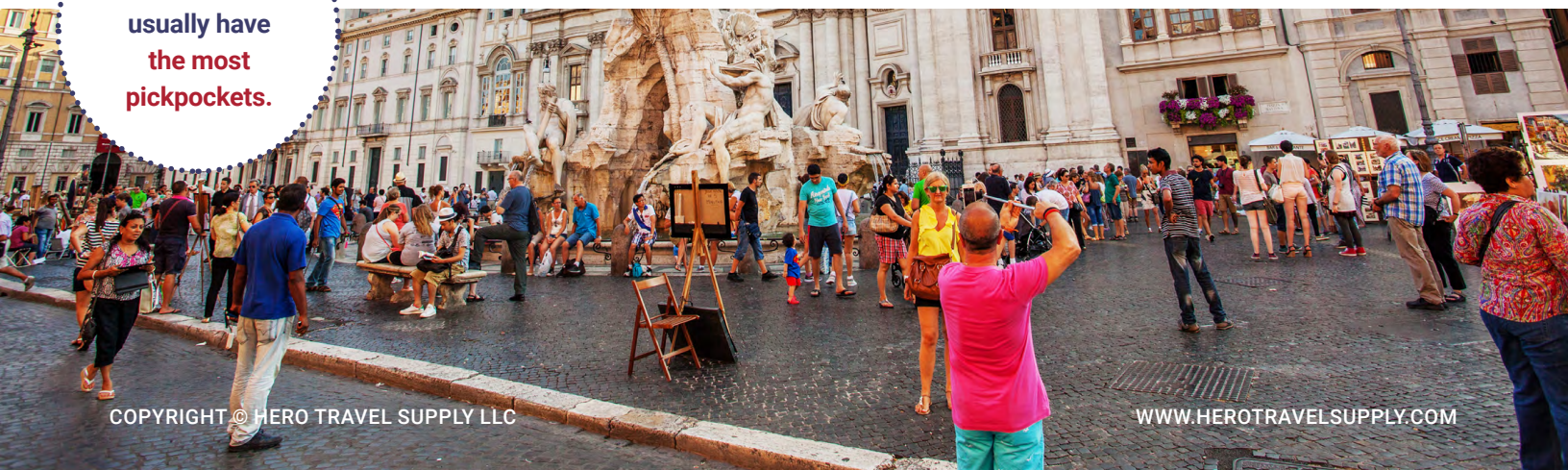
If someone approaches you out of the blue to offer "help," be aware that they may just be trying to swipe something from your bag or pocket.

**18 DO avoid sticking out as a tourist.** Pickpockets like to target tourists because they're usually unfamiliar with their surroundings and get easily distracted, plus they often have more cash and other valuables on them than locals. Depending on where you're traveling, it might be immediately obvious that you aren't from there. Still, taking steps to look less like you're a tourist – dressing like locals do, keeping your guidebook under wraps, not gawking at landmarks – will make you less of a target.

**19 DON'T look lost or confused.** If you're in a new place, you probably will be lost and confused at some point. But the trick is to not let it show. Pickpockets prey on people who seem like they don't know where they're going, and pulling out a map or guidebook in public is like waving a sign that says, "I'm lost!" Walk with confidence, even if you don't know where you're going, and duck into a quiet alley or doorway to pause and get your bearings.

**20 DO be on high alert at tourist attractions.** Tourist attractions – like museums, amusement parks, famous temples and churches, and important monuments – usually have the most pickpockets. After all, they have two of the big things pickpockets look for: crowds and tourists. Of course, seeing these kinds of sights is a big reason why people travel, and there's no reason to skip them. But when you go, bring only the minimum with you, and be aware of what's going on around you.

Tourist attractions usually have the most pickpockets.



## 21 DO be extra aware in all crowded areas.

Pickpockets are active at all types of crowded places, like in markets, at busy train stations, and around street performances. In crowded areas, people usually won't notice a pickpocket standing too close – and won't realize when someone who bumped into them was actually reaching into their bag. Plus, it's easier for a thief to disappear into the crowd. Whenever you're in busy areas, pay extra attention to what's going on, and keep your belongings close.



**22 DO be wary of groups of people.** We usually think of pickpockets as one lone person, but the reality is that they frequently operate in groups. If you find yourself suddenly surrounded by a bunch of people, there's a good chance they're working together to pickpocket you. Get away from them if you can, or at least hold your belongings tight.



### One couple experienced this in Beijing.



As we waited for the elevator, a large group of people queued up behind us, also waiting for the elevator... or so we thought. As soon as the doors to the elevator opened, there was a mad rush to get in, with people pushing and shoving each other to get on. This is actually quite typical for China where personal space isn't a common thing. But once the elevator doors closed, we realized we were the only people on the elevator. All that pushing and shoving? A distraction from what was really happening – my date's wallet being taken from her purse."

Jeremy from [www.TravelFreak.net](http://www.TravelFreak.net)

## 23 DO be especially aware on public transportation.

Pickpockets sometimes target passengers on trains and buses, who are often distracted by reading, listening to music, or trying to figure out which stop is theirs. And in the shuffle that occurs at stops, it's easy for a pickpocket to swipe something and then hop on or off; by the time you've noticed something is missing, the doors are closed and they're long gone.

**Keep your bag in front of you on the bus or train, especially at stops, and notice if someone is standing too close for comfort.**





**24 DON'T stand by the door or open windows on buses or trains.** When you get onto public transportation, go into the interior instead of standing next to the door or an open window. If you're right next to the door or an open window of a bus or train car, it's easy for someone standing on the curb or platform to reach in and grab something just before the door closes. They'll be safely outside and probably running the other direction as your bus or train takes off, and there won't be anything you can do.

**25 DON'T keep your belongings by the aisle, either.** On buses and trains that are crowded and have people in the aisles, whether it's passengers getting on and off or vendors selling goods (or, in some countries, preachers giving a sermon!), someone can easily snatch something while they're walking past. Avoid putting your bag in an empty aisle seat, and hold it in your lap instead. If you're traveling with someone, the safest place to put belongings is probably in between you.

**26 DO hold your belongings tight if there are motorbikes around.** The ride-by bag snatching is a problem in many countries where motorbikes are a common mode of transportation. The most common scenario is for someone to ride by on a motorbike and grab a purse or backpack off a pedestrian who's walking down the street or standing at an intersection. Standing back from the road will help keep you out of reach. Ride-by snatchings can also happen if you're sitting on another motorbike or even riding in a tuk-tuk or another type of open vehicle. In any case, make sure you keep a tight hold on your bag; buckling the waist belt of a backpack and wearing cross-body bags instead of shoulder bags will also help.



**The most common scenario is for someone to ride by on a motorbike and grab a purse or backpack off a pedestrian who's walking down the street.**

**27 DON'T let your view get blocked.** Another common tactic is for pickpockets to use something to physically block your view, like a map, magazine, or charity brochure. In addition to distracting you, it'll shield them as they reach into your bag or grab an item that's sitting out.

#### TRAVEL EXPERT

**One blogger experienced this at an outdoor café in Spain.**



A young girl about 20 years old approached. Dressed as a tour operator, she started to explain her tours. While speaking, she placed a map over our table to highlight the route. Within a split second, her hand had slid under the map to above my phone sitting on the table right in front of me. Out of nowhere a waiter appeared and put his hand on my phone before she could grab it." Many tourists aren't so lucky! When a stranger is trying to show you something or waving something in your face, make sure they're not using it to block your view of your belongings.

Paula from [www.ExpertAbroad.com](http://www.ExpertAbroad.com)



**28 DO be wary of street performers and vendors who approach you.** In many countries, it's common for street performers and vendors to approach people sitting at outdoor cafes, bus stops, the beach, or other public areas. While many are just hoping you'll buy their wares or tip them for a performance, others are creating a ruse intended to distract you from what's really going on. They ensure your attention is on whatever they're doing or selling instead of on your own belongings – then they or their accomplice can easily swipe something, and you probably won't notice it's gone until they are, too.



**29 DO keep your bag secure while at restaurants.** When eating at a restaurant, your focus is usually on the food, your dining companions, the atmosphere – not on your belongings. That makes restaurants, especially crowded ones and those with outdoor seating, an easy target for pickpockets. While you're eating or chatting, they can come up and snatch your bag, and you may not even notice it's gone until after dessert. It might be tempting to hang your purse over the back of your chair, but that makes it an easy target. Instead, keep it right next to you if there's space, set it on an empty chair that's against the wall, or put it in between your feet.

**30 DON'T set your phone on a restaurant table.** Pickpockets often lurk around sidewalk cafes to nab items from unsuspecting diners, and the easiest things to steal are those that are sitting out. Unfortunately, it's a common habit in today's world for everyone to set their cell phone on the table while they're out to eat. Leaving your phone inside your bag will not only protect it from pickpockets, it'll also help you focus on spending time with your dining companions (those notifications can wait!).



**Pickpockets often lurk around sidewalk cafes to nab items from unsuspecting diners, and the easiest things to steal are those that are sitting out**



**31 DO know that pickpockets can be children.** Not many people are suspicious of young children – and that makes them even more effective as pickpockets.

TRAVEL EXPERT

**One travel expert encountered some child scammers in Addis Ababa.**

“I was walking down Churchill Avenue toward the post office when two boys who were about 10 years old came towards me from the opposite direction. They approached slightly to either side of me, and the one on the right held up an A4 piece of paper with information about a camp or a charity or something. The one on the left started talking about whatever was on the paper and, had I not seen them coming and guessed what was happening, the one with the paper would have used it as a shield while he went through my pockets.” If there are children hanging around you and acting suspicious, especially at tourist attractions or on public transportation, be just as wary as you would with adults.

Jo from [www.OverTheEdgeOfTheWild.com](http://www.OverTheEdgeOfTheWild.com)

**32 DON'T leave valuables out in your hotel room.** This tactic isn't exactly pickpocketing, but it's still something you'll want to avoid. If thieves who look through a window into your room can see valuables are sitting out, they'll go to extreme lengths to reach them.

TRAVEL EXPERT

**Two travel experts found out about a common strategy used in Jamaica.**

“Thieves use long poles with hooks to steal valuables through windows. (There, windows usually have iron bars for security, but if the glass slides open or is broken, they can still reach through the bars.) As a foreigner or a tourist, there's already an assumption that you probably have valuables, so it's important to minimize any opportunities for theft.”

Michelle from [www.IntentionalTravelers.com](http://www.IntentionalTravelers.com)

**33 DO spend some time researching your destination.** While many pickpocketing tactics are used worldwide, there might be specific schemes that are unique to your destination. Before your trip, read up on pickpocketing there so you'll know what areas are the riskiest and what to watch out for.

**Before your trip, read up on pickpocketing specifically for your destination**

# CONCLUSION

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While your main focus should be on enjoying your travels, it's prudent to inform yourself of possible the dangers of your destination before you leave. You can then keep this information in the back of your mind as you make your way on your journey. As long as you are informed and prepared, you should have nothing to worry about.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to email us at [support@herotravelsupply.com](mailto:support@herotravelsupply.com)

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